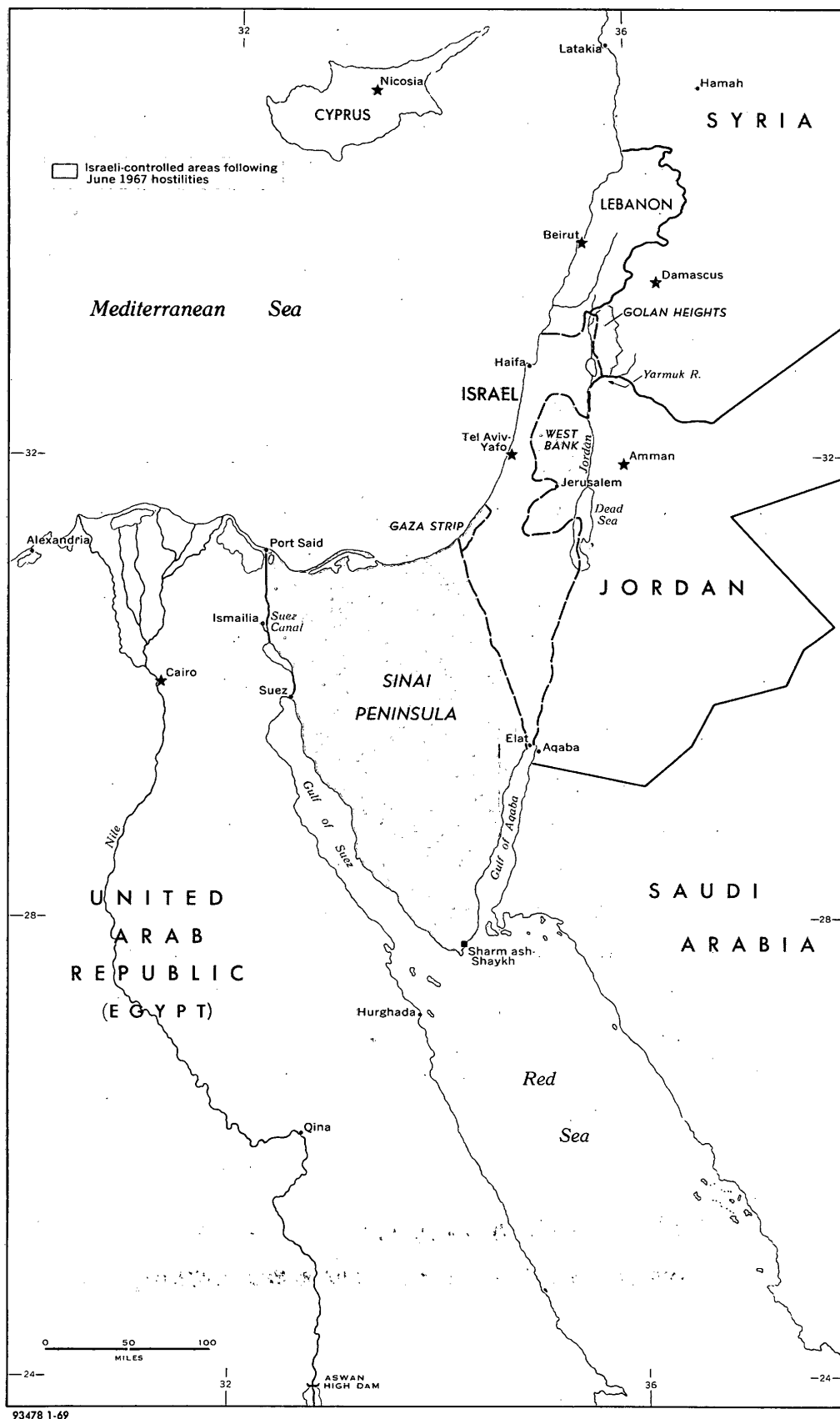


## *The President's Daily Brief*

12 February 1969



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LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

12 FEBRUARY 1969

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

13 February 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF  
12 FEBRUARY 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

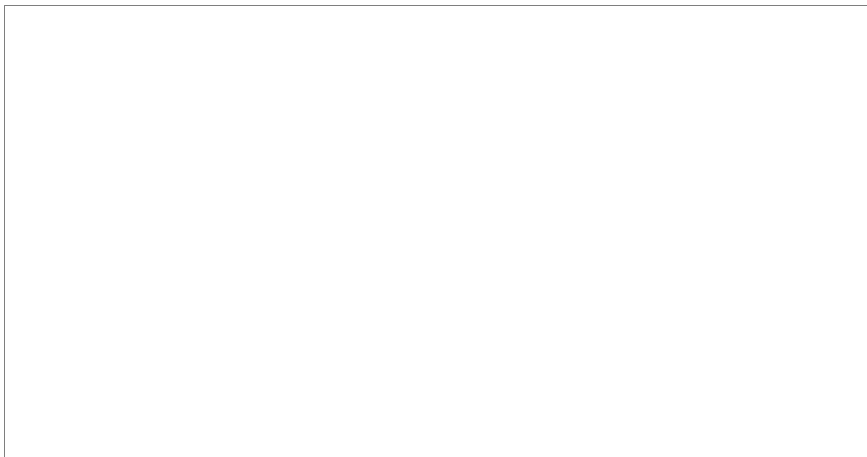
Yasir Arafat, the leader of Fatah and newly elected head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, will visit Beirut soon, and the Lebanese hope they can persuade him to cooperate with their efforts to limit terrorist operations based in Lebanon. They regard Arafat as a potentially moderate leader who does not want serious trouble along the Lebanon-Israel border. They are unwilling to push him too hard on the issue, however, for fear of undermining his position among his fellow Palestinians.



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EUROPE

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SOVIET AFFAIRS



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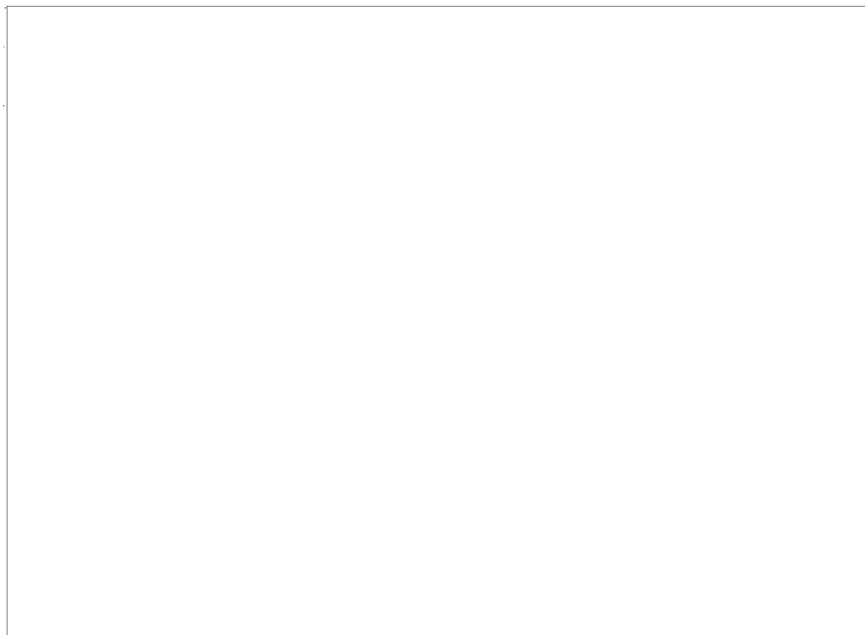


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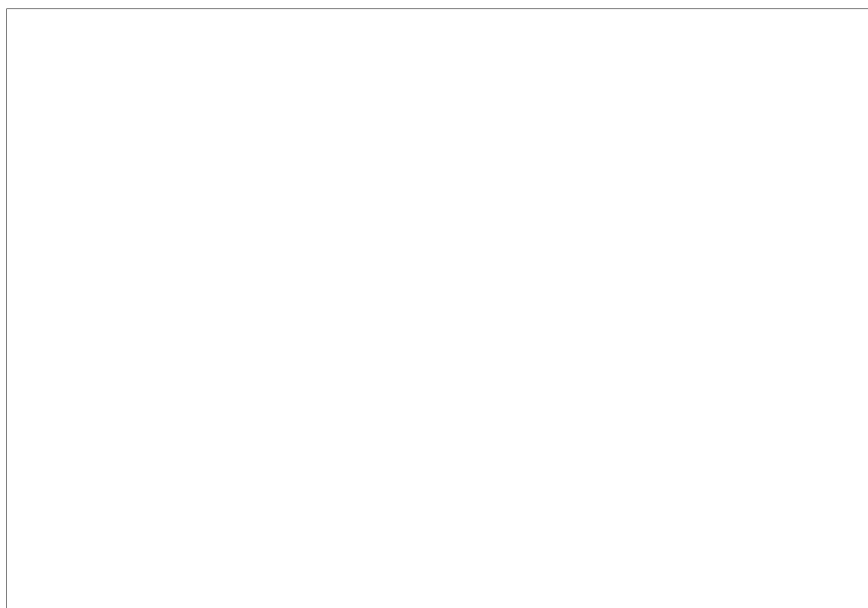
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VIETNAM



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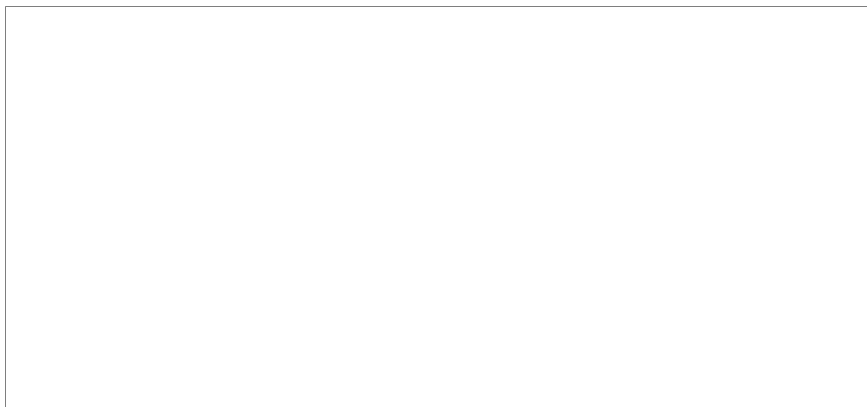
## II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS



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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

Lebanon is trying hard to control terrorists operating within its borders.

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These attempts are not likely to have much success.

The emotional hold the terrorists have in the Arab world is so strong that most governments fear the domestic political consequences of any action against them. The Lebanese in fact are probably well aware of this, but they may hope that a well publicized effort to control the terrorists will help stay Israel's retaliatory hand.

\* \* \*

Fatah, the biggest and most active of the Palestinian terrorist groups, has begun to widen its horizons. Last month Fatah picked up 31 seats on the national council of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which since its establishment in 1964 has been viewed by Arab states as the most legitimate vehicle for Palestinian nationalism. Using

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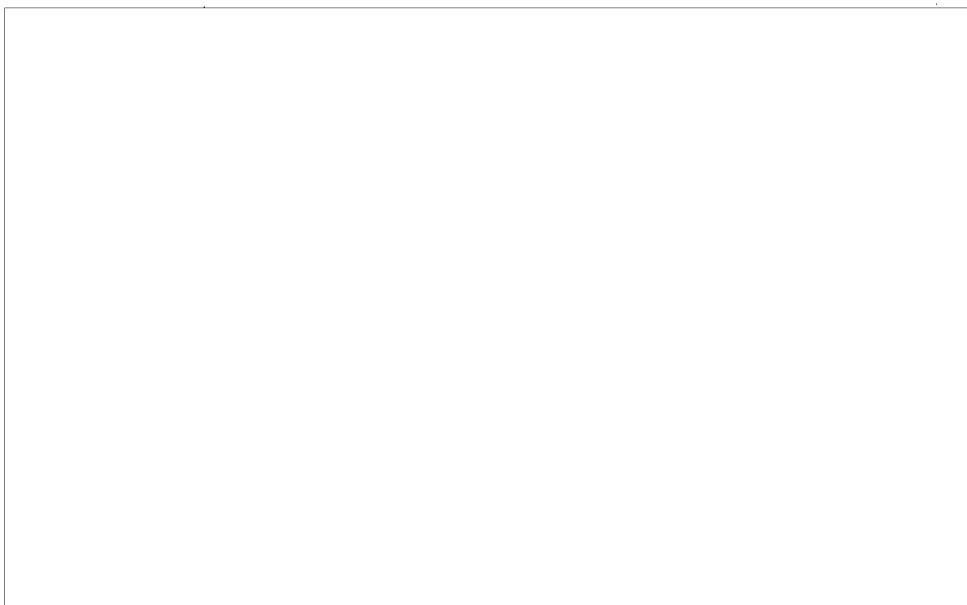
this platform, Fatah then managed to place three of its men on the 11-man executive committee. Fatah's principal spokesman, Yasir Arafat, was elected chairman.

EUROPE

There is nothing of significance to report.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

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VIETNAM

Vietnamese Communist propaganda in the past two days provides a preview of the line Hanoi and the Front are likely



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to take in tomorrow's session in Paris. The Communists have focused squarely on the issue of US troop withdrawal as the first order of business in the talks. While not abandoning the priority they put on political issues, the Communists are now saying that "unconditional" withdrawal of US forces is the "key" issue in a settlement, implying that they hope to get into broader questions via this one. They also insist, as they have been doing for several weeks, that this question must be resolved by the negotiators in Paris. They seem genuinely concerned that a gradual US withdrawal worked out between Saigon and Washington, and based essentially on a strong allied military position, might significantly reduce pressure on the US to make political concessions to the Communists.

The Communist view of the withdrawal issue was put most authoritatively in a Nhan Dan commentary on 12 February demanding an immediate and "unconditional" withdrawal of US forces. This presumably means that for a while at least the Communists will not discuss "mutual withdrawals." The Front's Liberation Radio, taking its usual harder-than-Hanoi approach, makes this point explicitly by saying that only the US has "external forces" in Vietnam and that there is "no question of mutual withdrawal."

Despite the propaganda format of the current withdrawal theme, there is good reason to believe that whenever private substantive discussions begin, the Communists would like to make this issue the first item on the agenda.

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Hanoi's propaganda position that "unconditional" withdrawal is a nonnegotiable demand is simple bombast designed for openers in any future private talks.

The Communists are well aware, however, that the US withdrawal they seek will only come about as a result of negotiations, and that eventually they will have to reciprocate by pulling out forces of their own. They doubtless would prefer that their reciprocity on this issue take place on an undeclared basis, much as it did on the bombing halt. They may even try eventually to use unacknowledged, unilateral withdrawals of selected NVA units as incentive for US concessions.

\* \* \*

Reports from all four Corps areas of South Vietnam indicate extensive Communist preparations for attacks prior to, during, and just after the Tet holidays. No major enemy offensive activity was reported during the past 24 hours, however.

\* \* \*

While a great deal of attention quite properly has been focused on indications of impending Communist military action during the Tet period, it should also be noted that the Communists apparently hope to inspire popular antigovernment demonstrations in urban areas as part of their offensive.

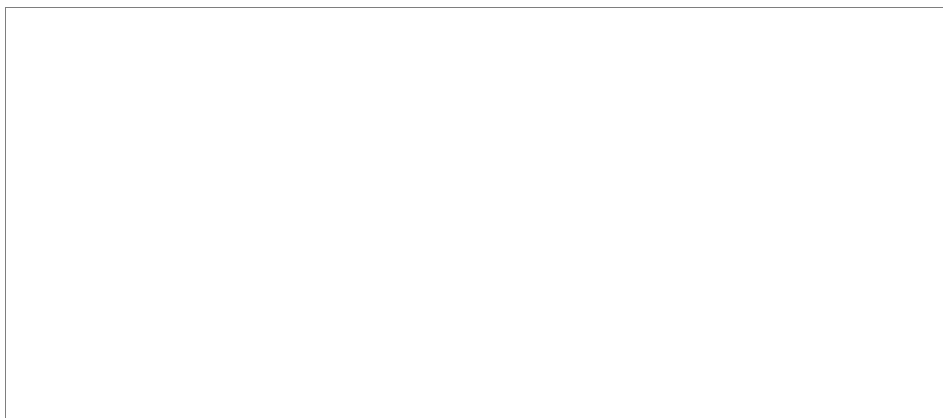
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Preparations for

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demonstrations have become fairly widespread in the last two months, especially in villages close to district and provincial capitals.



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The impact of any demonstrations will depend in large measure on the degree of success achieved in coordinated enemy military actions. The demonstrators would have difficulty drawing sustained support and would be dangerously exposed unless the government were distracted by significant enemy operations.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

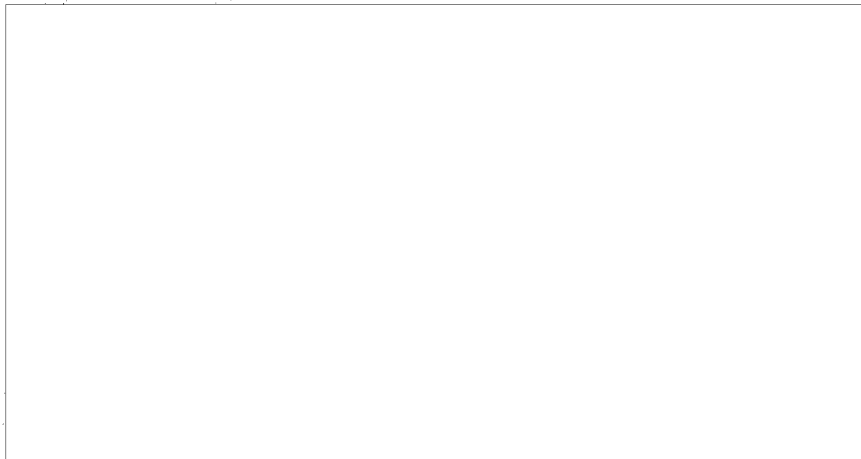
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Prime Minister Montagne tried to play down the seriousness of the International Petroleum Company dispute in his talk with the US chargé this morning, but he was notably unforthcoming when the chargé pressed him on specifics. He did nothing to dispel the impression that the government intends to push ahead on all three of the issues in dispute--the value of the company's expropriated property, the \$15 million bill for petroleum acquired by the company since last October, and the \$690 million claim for the company's "unjust profits" since the oil field was opened up in the 1920s.

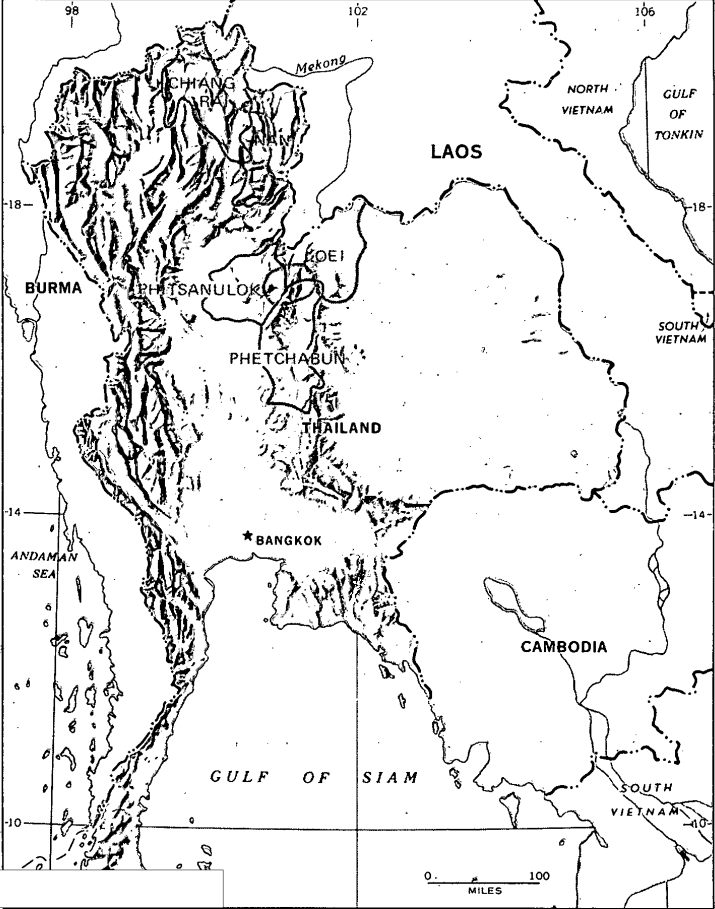
To us, this seems to be further confirmation that, however much Montagne may want President Velasco's job, there is no significant difference between them where the IPC is concerned.

LATIN AMERICA

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Thailand: Areas of Tribal Insurgency



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THAILAND

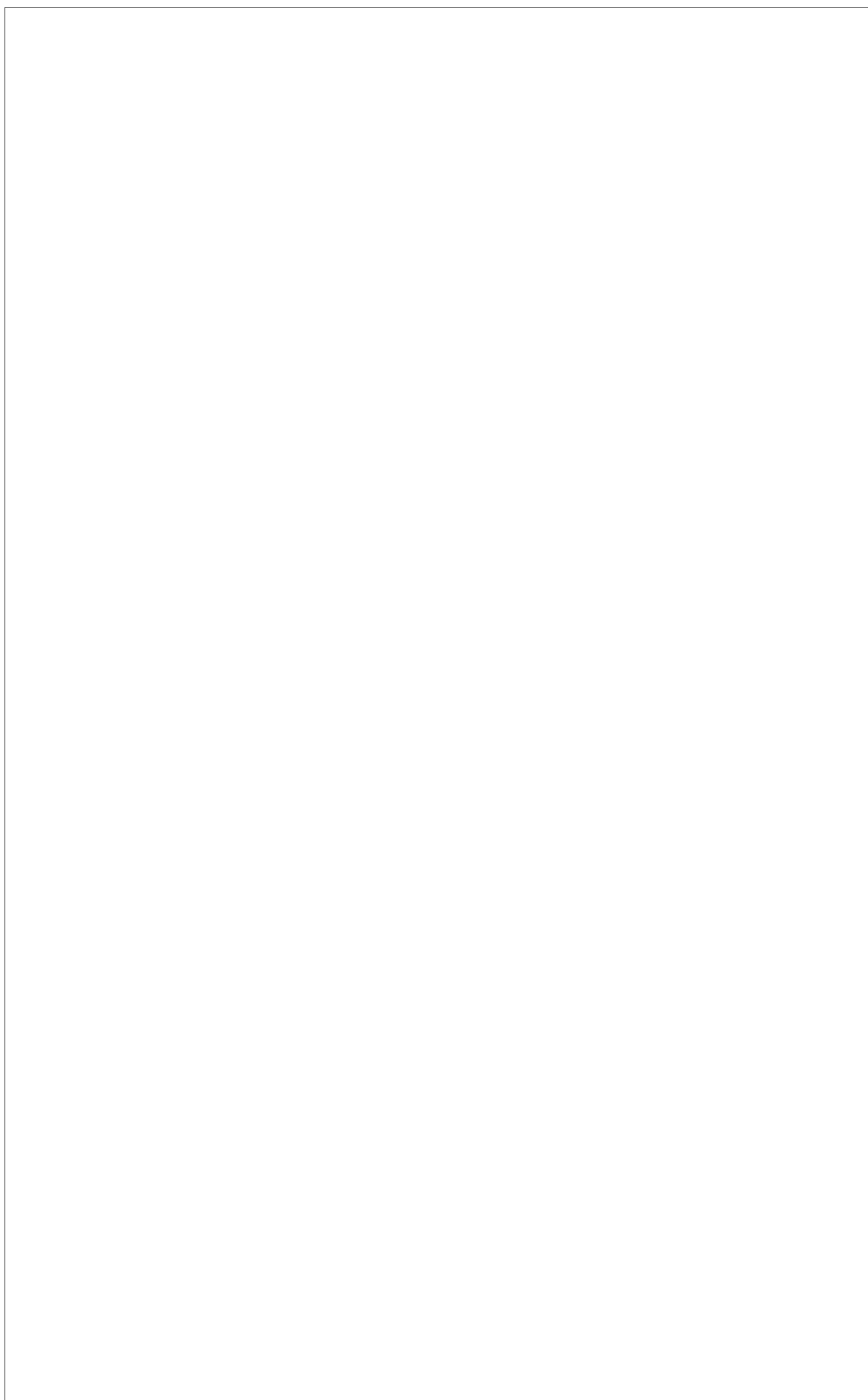
The government position in the north continues to deteriorate. Thai troops in the northern tri-border area have been unable to drive Communist-led guerrillas from fortified villages and have now virtually given up patrolling.

The insurgents, in addition to inflicting heavy casualties on government troops, are also making further efforts to destroy the government's severely disrupted tribal development program. Recently they have for the first time attacked civilian development teams working among tribal groups and are making sporadic raids on heretofore secure main roads.

Farther north, in Nan and Chiang Rai provinces, where armed insurgent activity by Meo hill tribesmen is entering its third year, there is increasing evidence that the Communists are attempting to extend their influence into adjacent lowland areas. The recent capture of a group of ethnic Thai insurgents suggests the Communists are making some headway in recruiting lowland villagers.

In the face of these developments, the army has decided to concentrate its activities in the lowlands. Citing the heavy expense of maintaining troops in the field, as well as a desire to re-establish a "reserve" force, the 3rd Army has withdrawn a third of its troops committed to the security operation and has deactivated its forward operations headquarters. The immediate effect will be to enable the insurgents to establish a secure base area in the north.





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## SOVIET STRATEGIC FORCE OPTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE: Soviet strategic policy in recent years has been aimed at narrowing and eventually overcoming the United States lead in capabilities for intercontinental attack. The primary objective of the Soviets has been to achieve a more meaningful deterrent. They set the goals for achieving this at a time when the US enjoyed a superiority in strategic delivery systems which put the Soviet Union at a political and psychological disadvantage. To this end, the Soviets have built strategic forces which give them a large assured-destruction capability, as well as important capabilities for limiting damage to themselves. Although the Soviets have only begun to narrow the gap in submarine-launched ballistic missiles and remain inferior in heavy bombers, they will draw even with the US later this year in the number of operational ICBM launchers. Current programs will bring further improvements in their strategic position over the next year or so.

\* \* \*

The Soviets, nonetheless, are well aware that the United States is moving toward a number of significant improvements in strategic capabilities. The improved deterrent posture which the Soviets are now achieving could be seriously undercut by the US deployment of Poseidon, Minuteman III, Sentinel, and other new strategic systems. Faced with these US developments, we believe that Soviet military planners have a limited set of options available to them for the near term.

### Options for Strategic Defense

Strategic defense continues to be a focus of major Soviet efforts, but offers the least possibilities for success in the

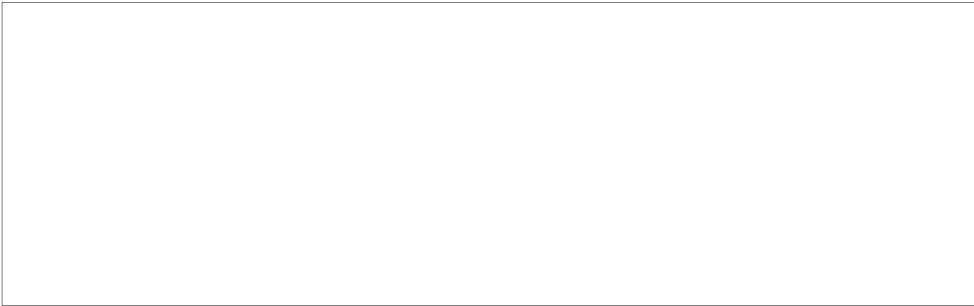
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foreseeable future.



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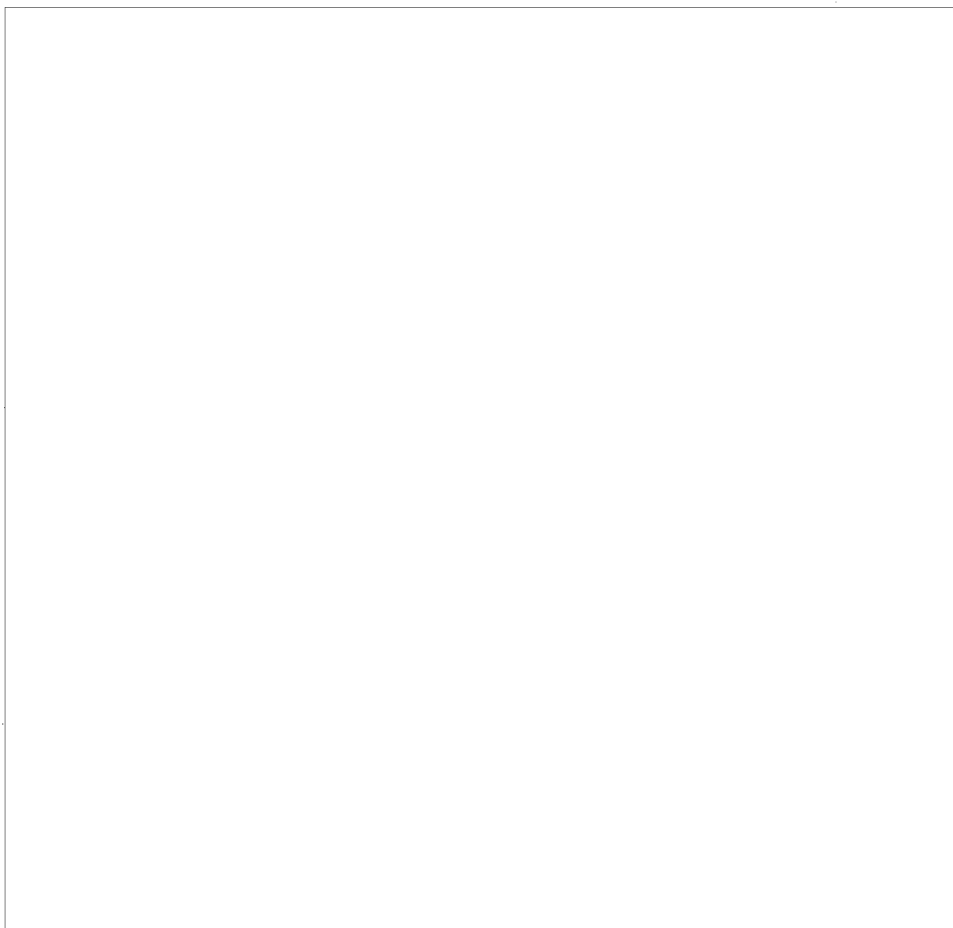


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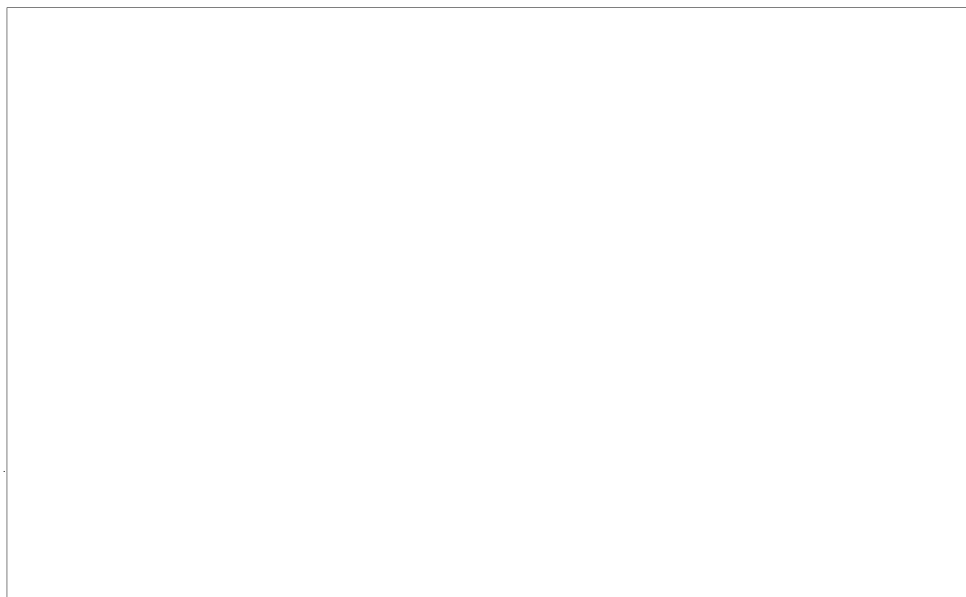
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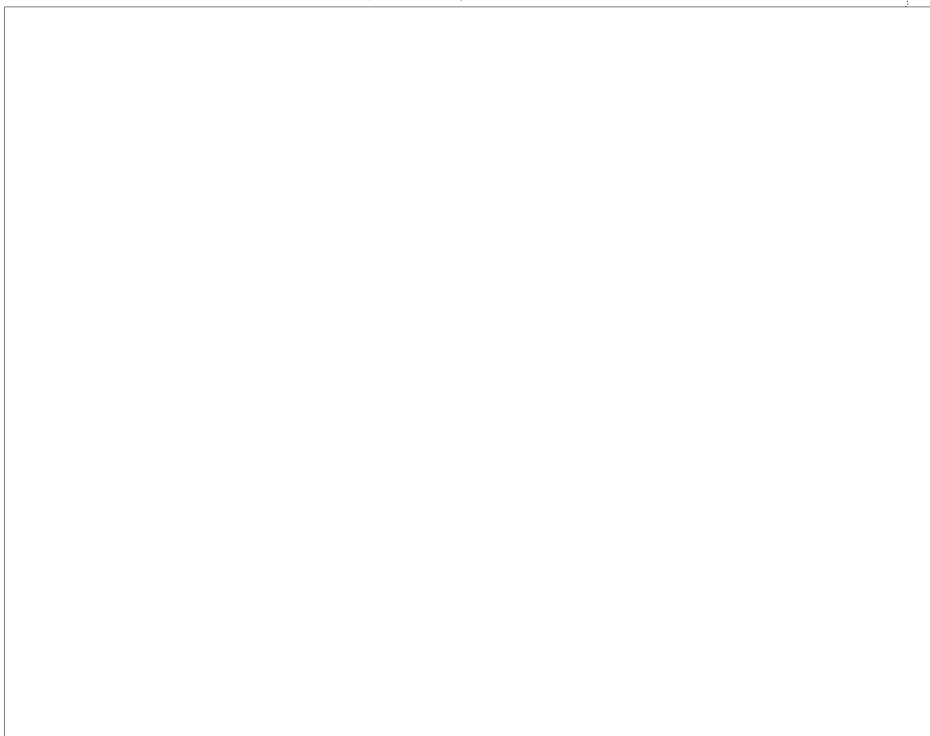


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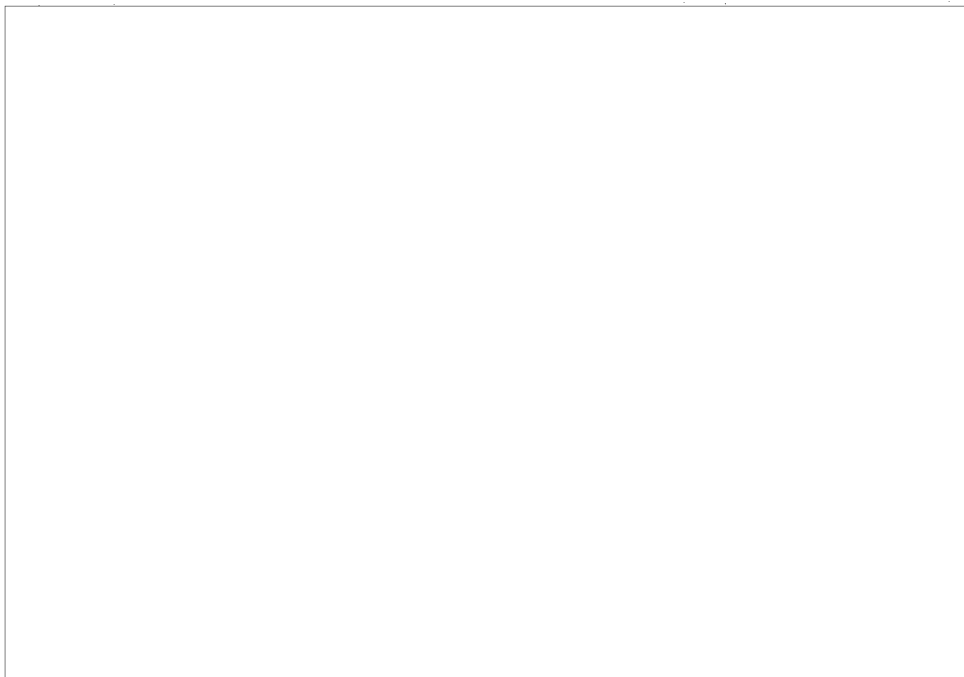
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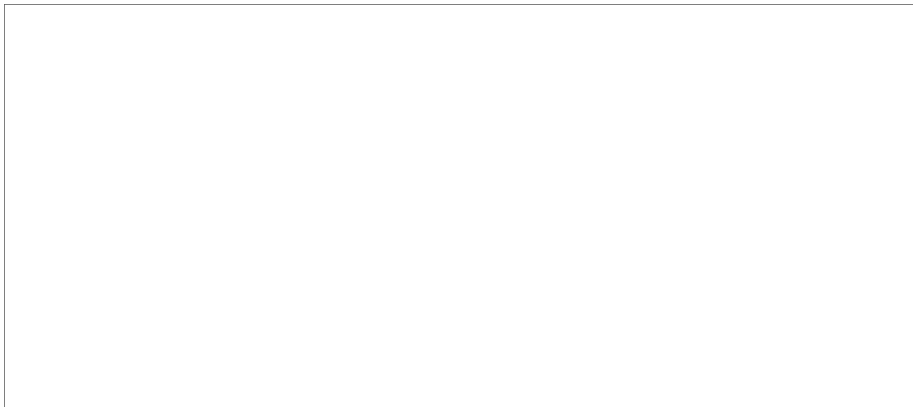


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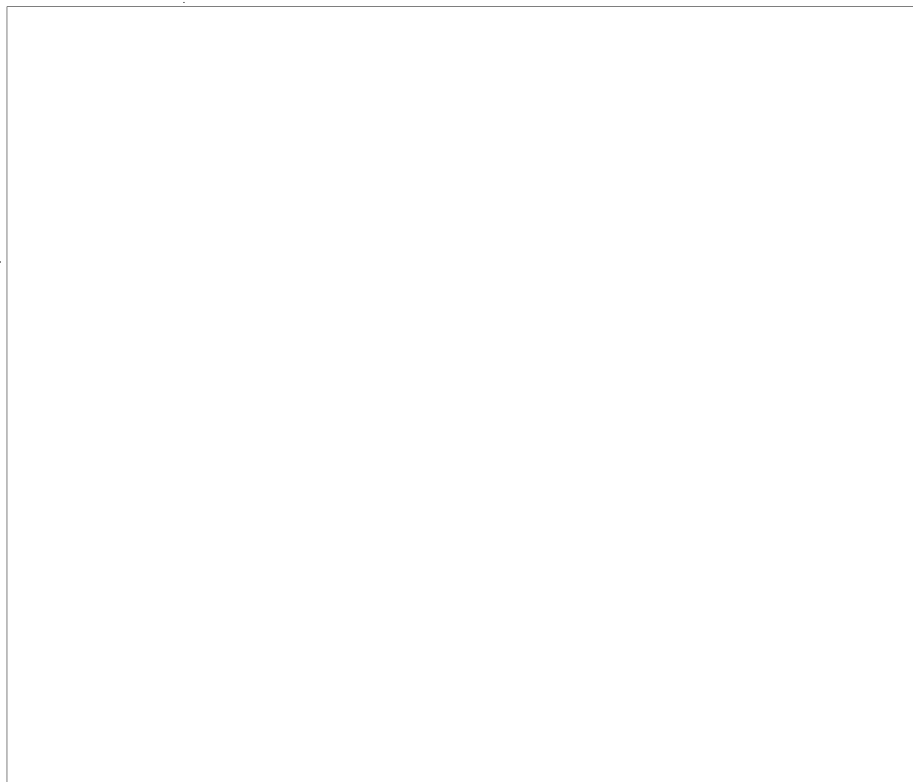
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